



Chesapeake Health Department

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Public Health Bulletin

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TO:	See Distribution Below
SUBJECT:	Caution eating bagged Spinach -- <i>Chesapeake Health Department ISSUES CAUTION ABOUT EATING RAW, BAGGED SPINACH</i>

(Chesapeake, Va.) – While there are no confirmed cases of illness in Virginia, state public health officials are echoing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s warning to avoid eating raw bagged spinach in light of recent reports of a multi-state outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7. The bacteria can cause severe bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps. In rare cases the illness can be severe and may even lead to death. Usually, little or no fever is present and most people recover without treatment in 5 to 10 days.

Residents can protect themselves against E. coli 0157:H7 by following these precautions-

- Don’t eat raw, bagged spinach until FDA lifts its warning
- Always wash raw fruits or vegetables under running water before eating
- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after preparing foods, after using the toilet, handling animals or changing diapers. Use good hygienic practices.
- Wash cutting boards after meats have been on them and before using the same surface to cut fruits and vegetables, or use separate cutting boards for meats and other foods

Because contaminated meat is the greatest source of E. coli 0157:H7, never eat rare or undercooked ground beef, and cook it to 160 degrees F or higher.

People who get sick from E. coli 0157:H7 usually do so within three to four days after eating contaminated foods. If you have eaten raw spinach within the past 24 hours and experience gastrointestinal symptoms you may want to contact your physician.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) strongly recommends that bagged fresh spinach NOT be consumed in any form. Due to the virulence of E. coli 0157:H7 and the severity of the illness, the recommendation at this time is not to consume bagged spinach, even if it is cooked. The Chesapeake Health District has contacted the local schools, daycares, group homes, food service facilities and hospitals in the area.

For more information about E. coli 0157:H7, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Chesapeake Health Department, Environmental Health @ 382-8672.

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